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Summary record of the 11th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 21 October 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Abelian ..... (Armenia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 117: Pattern of conferences (*continued*) (A/51/946; A/52/7 (paras. 113 and 114), A/52/685, A/52/803 and A/52/1000; A/53/16 (paras. 334-352), A/53/21, A/53/32, A/53/221, A/53/257 and A/53/507)

1. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced the Advisory Committee's report (A/53/507) on three issues addressed in four reports of the Secretary-General: interpretation and translation issues referred to in section III, paragraphs 13 to 15, of General Assembly resolution 52/220 (A/53/221), a cost-accounting system for conference services (A/52/1000 and A/53/257), and access to the optical disk system (A/52/803). With respect to the Secretary-General's report on interpretation and translation issues, the Advisory Committee welcomed the introduction of new technology in the field of translation, as well as other measures that had been or were being implemented, such as a revision of job descriptions, staff training, peer review and spot checks. In paragraph 5 of its report, the Advisory Committee raised a number of issues and recommended that the Secretary-General should address them in a special report.

2. With respect to cost accounting, the Advisory Committee had concluded that the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/257) did not contain the specific and conclusive information needed to enable the Advisory Committee either to reject the proposal for cost accounting or to recommend its endorsement. The Advisory Committee had also concluded that the most important issue in that area was the need to define clearly the objective of cost accounting in the United Nations. In the past, the Advisory Committee had cautioned against the establishment of elaborate cost-accounting systems the costs of which might outweigh their benefits. The Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General should be requested to address the weaknesses identified by the Advisory Committee, to refine his proposals and to resubmit them at the earliest opportunity, taking into account such additional policy guidance as the General Assembly might wish to give.

3. Regarding access to the optical disk system (ODS), the Advisory Committee had no objection to the Secretary-General's proposal, but it recommended that a way should be found to apply income generated through ODS subscriptions directly to help meet the cost of ODS maintenance and/or expansion. The Advisory Committee trusted that quality and priority of service to Member States would be maintained. It also felt that a system to monitor satisfaction with ODS should be put in place.

The meeting rose at 10.10 a.m.